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ART. III. — *The Asian Mystery. Illustrated in the History, Religion, and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria.* By the REV. SAMUEL LYDE, M. A., Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, Author of "The Ansyreeh and Ismaeleeh." London : Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts. 1860. 8vo. pp. 309.

THE title of this work is fantastic, and, as we think, not well chosen. The history, rites, and religious opinions of the Nusairis of Northern Syria are certainly obscure ; but it is unduly exalting a rude and unimportant people to make them the type of mystery in Asia. While the tenets and the story of the Mongols and the ancient Aryan races are still so imperfectly understood, — while there is a literature of nations civilized and great in the pre-historic ages yet to be interpreted, — there is no fitness in dignifying the secrets of a few wild mountaineers with the name of "The Asian Mystery." A pleasant and valuable monograph has, however, been made by Mr. Lyde. He has brought us to know a singular race of men, concerning whom our information has heretofore been exceedingly scanty, though their villages are not far from frequented routes of travel. But he has not, in his account of their origin or their religion, thrown any new light upon the sources of the Oriental theosophy. His work is rather a contribution to geographical science than to philosophical or religious history.

Mr. Lyde's book has not, nevertheless, any air of pretension. The assuming tone of the title is not sustained by any claim to superior knowledge or striking discovery. In a very modest preface the author mentions his special qualifications for the task he has undertaken, and states his practical design in writing the volume. His qualifications are, first, a residence for many years among the people in their own mountains, where they are unmixed with other tribes ; secondly, information acquired directly from servants taken from the Ansairee people, especially from an intelligent boy, who had been fully informed concerning the belief and customs of his tribe ; and thirdly, the possession of a liturgical book, called the "Manual of Sheikhs," in which all the main points of the system are declared. To

these peculiar qualifications he has joined the study and examination of what has been elsewhere published concerning the Ansairee people, both in Asiatic and European languages. Though finished as to the text, the work does not seem to be fully completed, and the notes with which he intended to enrich and illustrate it he did not live to write. His book is a posthumous work, and is published by his surviving relatives.

The sources of knowledge concerning the Ansaireeh and their opinions are few, and not altogether trustworthy. Burckhardt, Carsten Niebuhr, Volney, and Walpole,* passed through their land, and have given of them extended notices. In his *Annales de Voyages*, M. Rousseau has discussed the question of their opinions. In the *Revue d'Orient* for June, 1856, there is an article on the Ansaireeh from the pen of M. Victor Langlois, who professes to draw his information from a manuscript in the library of the Mufti of Tarsus. The journals of the French and German Oriental societies have contained repeated accounts of Ansairee manuscripts and mass-books, principally in the communications of M. Catafago of Beyrout. In his recent work on the "Religions of Syria," Rev. John Wortabet devotes a dozen pages to the "Nusariyeh," but his information concerning them is mostly taken from Mr. Lyde's previous account of his visit among them, and seems not to be derived from any personal knowledge. The work before us is probably the most trustworthy, as it is certainly the most complete and accessible, work on the subject in the English tongue.

The name which Mr. Lyde gives to this people is not that by which they are generally called. Other writers give it as the "Nosairis," or the "Nusairis," or the "Nusaireeh," or even the "Nasarieh," or "Nasiariens." This last is the term applied to them in the Jesuit letters. Maundrell spells the name "Neceres," while Pococke styles them "Noceres." Burckhardt speaks of the Ansari, while Volney tells of the Ansaria. The common Arabic designation is "An Nusaireeyeh," and

* The work of Lieutenant Frederic Walpole, the "Ansaryii and the Assassins," was published in London in 1851, in three volumes, octavo. The notices of the Ansairee people, however, are confined to the third volume, and are not to be received as accurate. They deal only with the external life of the people, and give no information concerning their history or their religion.

the name which Mr. Lyde adopts is simply a contraction of this Arabic title. They are not, however, accustomed to use this name in speaking of themselves. Like the other secret sects of the East, they prefer to employ some general and unpretending term, and that by which they are commonly known is "Fellaheen," or peasants. They are as unwilling as the Druses or the Yesidees to give any clew to their religious opinions by the name which they bear. In an account of the sect, the name which Mr. Lyde chooses, Ansaireeh, will do as well as any; though the English spelling is altered from the orthography of his previous work, where he wrote it "Ansyreeh." It is not easy to be consistent in rendering into English the unmanageable sounds of the Arabic alphabet.

The boundaries and geography of the Ansairee country are carefully given in the opening chapter of the volume. The mountain range of which they are the nearly exclusive possessors extends from the river El Kebri, the ancient Eleutherus, on the south, nearly to the mouth of the Orontes and Antioch on the north, or from the latitude of $34^{\circ} 46'$ to that of 36° , or thereabouts, with a varying breadth of from twenty to thirty miles. But the people are not by any means confined to this mountain possession. They are found in great numbers on the maritime plain which environs the ancient seaport of Ladakieh, and their villages are scattered in the half-desert region watered by the upper Orontes, the chief towns of which are Hums and Hamah. In Antioch, and the region around, they make an important part of the population; on the other side of the sea, in the districts of Adana and Tarsus, they have made settlements; at the base of Mount Hermon in Palestine they are the troublesome neighbors of the Arabs of Banias, the ancient Cæsarea Philippi; and it is affirmed by one of their sheikhs that they have a quarter in the distant city of Bagdad, with five hundred souls, and a town in the more distant kingdom of Persia.

The best estimates of the numbers of the Ansaireeh set these down as exceeding two hundred thousand, the larger part of whom inhabit the Ansairee Mountains and the surrounding region. This range of mountains, though lower than that of the Lebanon, and less fully cultivated, is far more

fertile, and not less picturesque in its natural scenery. If the traces of its former prosperity have mostly disappeared, enough remains to justify the legends of its richness and beauty. On the hill-sides are groves of beech, oak, and pine; and where the seed is sown, and is saved from marauders, a full harvest rewards the husbandman. Once the region was famous for its wine and its vineyards; but these have quite disappeared, as also have the later groves of fig, mulberry, and olive trees. The people are too poor and too barbarous to care for more than the most common grains and fruits, and have ceased to know the variety that their teeming soil once bore. The commerce of their only important port is in a plant not mentioned in the classic histories, and the sole association usually joined to the name of Ladakieh is that of choice tobacco. Ladakieh is for the Levant what Manilla is for the East Indies and Havana for the West Indies. All the surplus industry of the surrounding region, beyond labor for the necessities of life, is bent to the production of tobacco for the markets of Cairo, Damascus, Smyrna, and Stamboul. The grain raised is millet, barley, and a poor kind of wheat, in quantities scarcely more than enough for bare subsistence. The fruits are principally melons and cucumbers.

The villages of the Ansairee people are usually small and meanly built, the houses being of the simplest Arab construction, than which nothing can be more simple,—a square of bare walls, with roof of sticks plastered with clay. Of furniture there is next to none, and the loss of a village by fire is a slight calamity, and easily remedied. In some Ansairee villages the ancient castles of the Saracens and Crusaders still remain, tenanted by the stronger or the holier men of the tribes, or by Mussulman owners who dare to inhabit these fastnesses. The Ansaireeh avoid the larger towns, especially those on the seaboard. They are not found in Ladakieh itself, nor in Tripoli or Beyrout, and are not reckoned in the population of Damascus. They are afraid of a too close mingling with the other races of Syria, and are very jealous of any force which may surprise them. Their subjection to the Turkish power is scarcely more than nominal; the cost of collecting tribute in their mountains is hardly paid by the tribute

collected, and probably very little of what is wrested from them finds its way to the Golden Horn. The people are suspicious, fierce, ignorant, and independent, live in chronic fear of attack, and are ready for war upon the least provocation. Their laws are unwritten, and of the rudest kind, and they have no respect for any rule but that of force. Centuries of strife have reduced the people to barbarism, and the land to a wilderness. The form of government is patriarchal, each village has its sheikh, and there is a bond of nationality in the hatred of Moslems on one side and Christians on the other. Yet this bond is far less strong in the tribes of the Ansaireeh than in the tribes of Maronites or of Druses. There are constant intestine divisions, quarrels of adjoining districts, neighboring villages, and families, which continually pass to a bloody issue. Mr. Lyde's narrative of his six years' residence among them is a tale of perpetual violence and blood, of treachery, robbery, assault, and massacre, in which all classes are implicated, the women and children not less than the men. Feuds are hereditary, and are transmitted with increased malignity from generation to generation.

The vices of the Ansairee people, as will be seen from this account, are neither few nor small. No Syrian race is more turbulent, more profane, more addicted to swearing, lying, theft, and murder. But there are some vices, according to Mr. Lyde, of which this people have been unjustly accused. They do not, as it has been affirmed, have a community of wives, nor are they the race of whom Volney reports that their evening religious assemblies end, when the lights are extinguished, in unrestrained debauchery. In this particular, Mr. Lyde is of opinion that "they are not more immoral than Western nations," and that, when their rude methods of life are considered, they are rather remarkable for chastity than for profligacy. Their women go unveiled, and are treated with more consideration than the women of other Syrian tribes, though in their manners there is no sign of delicacy. Drunkenness is another vice to which the Ansaireeh are not much addicted; more, however, as Mr. Lyde thinks, from want of the means of gratification than from any love of sobriety. The people have ceased to make wine, and have no

money to buy imported liquors. They avail themselves of the occasions of religious feasting to enjoy a short fit of intoxication, and are able to madden themselves readily with the cheap arrack distilled from their mountain figs. They are in food, too, comparatively abstemious, eating no meat, but little rice, and not much else than wheat coarsely prepared, with figs and melons in their season. Yet they are gluttonous in what they can steal, and are always ready to eat without limit at another's expense. Mr. Lyde is forced to confess that "the way to the affections of the Ansaiireeh is through their stomachs, which they love dearly"; and he was fearful of literally being "eaten out of house and home" by the intrusive guests, who waited for no invitation, and would take no hint that their presence was unwelcome.

The positive virtues of the Ansaiireeh Mr. Lyde finds to be extremely few. He grants them the merit of love for their progeny, of hospitality, and of courage in protecting guests from harm; but he has not much more of good to say of them. These virtues, even, are of an equivocal kind. The love for children is not a very enduring sentiment, and quarrels between father and son are common and savage. For the hospitality which they show, they expect and demand an equivalent, and it is hard to discharge the obligation which a meal in one's house has created. The protection of a guest gives no assurance that he will not be assaulted and robbed when he has ceased to be a guest. The Ansaiiree religion contains, indeed, the Christian precept of brotherly love, and has its special rendering of the golden rule; but the commentary on this in actual life is mutual suspicion, envy, covetousness, and slander. Individuals may praise their race, and boast of its worth and its capacities, but they rarely praise each other, and the sentiment of personal friendship is hardly known among them. Their acquaintance is formed rather in deeds of crime than in deeds of love, and Mr. Lyde mentions that his Ansaiiree servant would recognize persons upon the road by the quiet remark, "O, I know that man! I robbed him or his brother." Compunction for crime has no place in their scheme of graces. The wife of a man whom Mr. Lyde had induced to leave off robbing thanked him for "causing her husband to repent,"

not because the man's heart had been changed, but because the chance of a violent death for him was now so much lessened.

In physical stature the Ansaireeh are above the average of Syrian races. They are well made, athletic, capable of enduring fatigue, and active in habits; in color brown, yet of a lighter shade than the swarthy Bedouin. The women wear fewer ornaments than the Maronite women, whether from more simple tastes or from greater poverty it is impossible to say. All the men go armed, as much in their labor as when they are on expeditions of forage or battle. The musket which they use is long, unwieldy, antiquated in construction, with the flint lock, and is equally liable to miss fire and to burst when overloaded. Their powder is a coarse, home-made article, of very uncertain explosive power. Their balls have no regular shape, and they carry but a small store of these. They are as little trained to be marksmen as they are disciplined to be soldiers. Their swords are dull scymitars, not very formidable in regular warfare. Fearful as is their sudden attack, from its dash and ferocity, they cannot stand long against the approach of well-ordered troops, and a single French or English regiment would be more than a match for their largest army. They fight naturally as marauders, but can do nothing as warriors; and their impatience of control and their quarrelsome temper unfit them for profitable military service.

Our interest in the Ansaireeh is not so much, however, on account of what they are, as on the score of their mysterious origin and their mysterious religion. They are in no sense an important people to modern commerce or civilization, and when they are exterminated from Syria, as they probably will be before the century closes, the world will suffer no great loss. They are but one degree in social value above the Indians of North America, and are destined, doubtless, to the same fate. But their history is more curious, and their religion a more inviting problem, than the history and religion of the American red men. They are allied with, if not descended from, famous races; and their theology is sufficiently elaborate to deserve a place in the "heretical phenomena" of religious history. Their religious customs are their most striking peculiarities, and many of the customs which seem secular, and by

no means pious, have a religious sanction. It is mainly on account of their religion, and its bearing in illustrating the religious history of Syria, that Mr. Lyde has written his book concerning them.

Much of the history of the Ansairee race, after the comparison of the best authorities, must be left to conjecture. It is a reasonable hypothesis that they are descendants, in large measure, of the original Canaanites who possessed the land, and of the refugees whom the several invasions of Syria sent to seek shelter in these mountains. But this theory cannot apply to all the Ansaireeh. Not only the religion, which was brought in at a comparatively late epoch, but the very physiognomy of a large portion of the people proves that other than the old Canaanite tribes have contributed to their formation. It is certain that the Ansaireeh of Bagdad and Persia are not of the ancient Syrian descent. Mr. Lyde has an easy and to himself a satisfactory way of marking the difference between the indigenous and the foreign stock, by the existing difference of sect. This Syrian people have their men of the North and men of the South, their Shemseeh, Men of the Sun, and their Kumreeh, Men of the Moon, not confined to the boundaries which their name suggests, but dispersed in the land, like Northerners and Southerners in America. There are Shemseeh, Northerners, who live in the extreme South, by the base of Mount Hermon, while the middle and fertile districts of the country are largely in possession of the Kumreeh or Southerners, who have an inordinate love of power. These two sects are extremely hostile to each other, and are constantly at war. Their leading men are of wholly different temper, the one set more determined in their religious conscience, the other more resolute in their arrogant domination. In many places the Kumreeh have fairly dispossessed the original Shemseeh, though on the whole the Shemseeh are the most numerous and powerful. Mr. Lyde's theory is, that the Shemseeh are the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, while the Kumreeh are the descendants of those who brought the religion into the land at a much later date. The proof of this he finds partly in the physiognomy of the two sects, in which he seems to discover marked differences,—in the case of the Kumreeh the

signs of clear Oriental origin, — and partly in the traditions of the Kumreeh sect, which uniformly include accounts of a home beyond the mountains, in the plains of Mesopotamia. The stories of the first migration disagree. In some legends it is a tribe, in some only a family, that first came into the country; in some, the migration is peaceful, of those escaping from oppression; in others, warlike, of those going to conquest; some insist that all the people, Shemseeah with the rest, came alike from the East; — but whatever the difference of the legends, they agree in this, that there was a migration, that Syria is not the native land of all the race, and that it is not the native land of the religion.

The derivation of the name, or rather of the *names*, by which the Ansaireeh have been called, affords a clew to their history. Some speculations on this topic may be dismissed as untenable, — that of Pococke, for instance, who derives the name from the Nazerini, a people mentioned by Pliny (Hist. V. 23: “Cœle habet Apamiam Marsyâ amne divisam a Nazerinorum tetrarchia”); that of Wolff, who makes the name a diminutive of Nussâra, as if the Ansaireeh were so corrupt in their religion as to be justly stigmatized as “little Christians”; and a conjecture mentioned by De Sacy, that a Syrian village named *Nasaria* is the source of the name. The probable, almost certain source of the name, “In Nusairieyeh,” which is the name given to them by an Arab author as early as A. D. 1021, is the patronymic of him whom the sheikhs regard as the founder of their sect, whose euphonious name in full runs “Abu Shnaib Mohammed ibn-Nusari il Becree in-Numairee il Abdee,” Mohammed being the man’s personal name, Nusari the name of his father, Shnaib the name of his son, and the other names titles of some family quality or distinction. “Sons of Nusari,” is the phrase which the people apply to themselves. Mr. Lyde gives several Arabic authorities which seem to decide this point conclusively. If not the actual founder of the sect, Nusari seems to have been one of its earliest teachers. The date of his appearance cannot be exactly fixed, but it was certainly not earlier than the middle of the ninth century. This is the exterior and popular name of the people, given to them by other tribes and by enemies. But the interior and sacred

name, which the initiated use among themselves, "Khaseeb-eeh," is derived from the name of the great apostle of the sect, who was to it what Hamza was to the sect of Druses. The ninety-ninth question of the Ansairee Catechism is, "Why do we bear the name of Khaseeb-eeh?" And the answer is, "Because we follow the teaching of our sheikh, Abu Abdullah il Hosein ibn Hamdan il Khaseeb-eeh." This man, according to the best chronology, was the missionary of Ansairee doctrines in Syria, from 900 to 920 A. D. His merits are exalted in all the manuscripts. He has the title of Lord (Rubb); he is called "the Ark of Security and Eye of Life"; and is referred to as the one "who made manifest to us the religion in all lands." He is not, however, included in the hierarchy of the Ansairee system.

The conclusion which Mr. Lyde draws from these historical hints is, that the Ansaireeh were an existing sect in Northern Syria at least as early as the close of the ninth century, separated by name as well as by doctrine from the other heretical sects, the Karmatians and Assassins. After this date, their history can be learned only from the scanty notices in the writings of travellers, and in the Arab chronicles. Gregory Abulfaradj tells of the vast numbers of Nazaræi killed by the Franks on their march to Jerusalem. Ibn-Batuta, more than two centuries later, speaks of their singular customs of worship and of their great numbers, and relates the story of a stratagem by which the Moslems subdued and slaughtered one of their tribes. Abulfeda (1317) mentions the Ansairee notion of the return of their Redeemer, and describes the political condition of the people. Maundrell (1697) remarks upon the chameleon habit of the people of the Northern mountains in assuming for the time the religion of those with whom they are conversing, and speaks of them as "great drinkers." The Jesuit missionaries have much to say upon the obstinate superstitions of a people who were insensible to their most urgent persuasions, and among whom they could do nothing. Pococke (1738) calls their religion a remnant of Paganism, and says that they seem fond of Christians, while the Turks despise them. According to Niebuhr, they were "not nearly so numerous as the Druses" a hundred years ago. Volney,

writing about seventy-six years ago, classifies the several sects of Ansaireeh with very doubtful accuracy ; and is followed in this by Burckhardt, within the present century, who pretends to know of the Ansairee sects, of which he mentions nothing but the names. The civil and social history of the people has left very imperfect monuments, and the only safe inference that we may draw is that it was once far more important in numbers, in wealth, in intelligence, and in relative force than it is at present.

In tracing the origin of the Ansairee religion, Mr. Lyde is greatly assisted by De Sacy's learned account of the heretical sects of Islam, and he finds in these the same preparation for the heresy of the Northern mountains that De Sacy found for the Druse heresy of the Lebanon. The Magian, Sabian, and Karmatian mysticisms are all concerned in this later development. More nearly allied to the Ansaireeh are the Eastern Ismaeleeh, the famous sect of Assassins, so formidable both to Saracens and Christians, — the most powerful secret organization of the East in the Middle Age. But Mr. Lyde distinctly denies that the Ansairee doctrines have been derived from those of the Ismaeleeh, since the former were prior in time, and differ radically from the Ismaeleeh doctrines in many important particulars. Their systems of Imâms are as unlike as their rules of morality. The Ismaeleeh religion is reduced to much better order than that of the Ansaireeh, and has more of the characteristics of a secret society.

The prime article of faith in the theology of the Ansaireeh, as in all heretical sects of Islam, is the absolute unity of God. God is one, by whatever variety of names he may be called, however numerous his manifestations, and whatever personalities he may employ. Less stress is laid upon this fact than in the Druse Catechism, and the Ansaireeh do not, like the followers of Hamza, assume the special name of "Unitarian," yet the absolute oneness and self-existence of God are not less positively asserted. This one God has three personalities, not co-equal and co-eternal with himself, but created each by the preceding. It is the first person who is properly the Supreme God ; the second person is created by the first, and the third by the second. The names of these several persons are the

Maana or Meaning, the *Ism* or Name, and the *Bab* or Door. The *Maana* is the absolute inner being, sense, and reality of all things, — what they are in essence ; the *Ism* is the revelation which is made of the inner reality ; and the *Bab* is the way by which the revelation comes to human knowledge. These persons of the Ansairee trinity have well-defined offices, and are inseparable in the various manifestations of God. They appear together, and they work together. The Supreme Deity has had in time seven manifestations, the last alone being full, perfect, and final. God's first appearance was in the trinity of Abel, Adam, and Gabriel ; his seventh and last appearance in the trinity of Ali, Mohammed, and Salmân il Farisee. In the list of manifestations, it is remarkable that, in all but one instance, the person who holds the highest rank in the Ansairee trinity is one who holds a subordinate place, either by age or rank, in the Biblical and historical account. Thus Abel is the *Maana* when Adam is the *Ism*, Joseph is the *Maana* when Jacob is the *Ism*, Joshua holds the same relation to Moses, Asaph to Solomon, Cephas to Jesus, and Ali to Mohammed, his father-in-law and the founder of the religion. The only exception is in the case of Seth and Noah ; and here, though Seth is the earlier in time, he has a less important place in the narrative of Genesis. The last *Maana*, Ali, is to the Ansaireeh, as to the Shiite sect of the Mussulmans, the perfect, the highest manifestation of God. All the other manifestations point to this, centre in this, and rest in this. Ali is substantially the Allah of the Ansaireeh, to whom divine attributes are ascribed, and in whose name prayers are made. Mohammed the Prophet is the *Ism*, the Name, under which Ali was made known ; and Salmân the Persian, his companion, is the *Bab*, the Door, through which men come to know Ali. This Ansairee trinity differs widely from the Christian trinity, not only in its subordination of persons, but in the duties which it assigns to these persons. It is indeed said in the Ansairee Catechism, that the ascriptions to God, as the "Compassionate," the "Merciful," are intended to apply severally to the *Ism* and the *Bab*. But there is no work which this *Ism* and this *Bab* perform that shows the special fitness of these epithets. Mohammed is not particularly compassionate,

nor is Salmân il Farisee peculiarly merciful. The Bab is not specially a sanctifier, more than the Ism is a redeemer.

The attributes of Ali, the Supreme Divinity, are not so much scientifically arranged as implied in the hyperbolic epithets by which he is honored. He is addressed as the "Light of Mortals," the "Lord of Might," "the Disperser of Sorrows," "the Possessor of Necks," the "Beauty of Gray Hairs," "Frequent in Miracles," the "Horseman among Horsemen," the "Light of Vision," the "Striker with the Sword," the "Filler of the Seas," the "Breaker of Idols," "Light of Lights," "Ancient of Days," "Key of Mercy," the "Straight Road," the "Great Building," "Speaker of Truth," the "Prince of true Believers," the "First and the Last," — and by a score more of similar epithets, which strive to exhaust the catalogue of divine perfections. All is ascribed to him that the Jews ascribe to Jehovah, or that the Moslems ascribe to Allah. A favorite name, by which he is constantly called, is that of "Emir in-Nahal," Prince of Bees, because his followers choose the best flowers. He is the creator of the world and of all men. He is the Providence that keeps all things alive. He is the present and infinite Power, Wisdom, and Love. He knows all things, sees all things, and rules all things, though he is and always was invisible. The Ansaireeh have no doctrine of Incarnation like that of the Christians, and they hold that Ali took no flesh and blood, but only had a luminous shape. Their faith concerning the body of Ali is that of the Docetæ concerning the body of Christ, and of the Druses concerning the humanity of Hamza. His mother and brethren were only *apparent*, not real.

Some of the names which the Ansairee manuscripts mention as given to Ali, "in the various languages," are peculiar. "His mother," they say, "called him Haiderah, lion; the monk called him the most great Law, and Simon is-Safa, or Simon the Pure. He called himself in the pulpit Aris-totle; and he is called in the Old Testament, Bareea (from the word *create*). His name in the New Testament is Elias, of which the interpretation is Ali. With the priests he is called Baweea; by the Hindoos, Kankara; in the Psalms, Areea; with the Greeks, Butras, Peter. His name with the Ethio-

pians is Habeena ; with the Abyssinians, Batreek, Patriarch ; and the Armenians call him Afreeka. Finally, he is called by the beings who inhabited the world before men, the Righteous, the Compassionate." It is remarkable that this phenomenal person, this mere luminous shape, should have left in the Ansairee writings discourses from the pulpit, in which he personally bears testimony to his unity and his immense knowledge.

Ali, as the Supreme God, is alone to be adored. The "Ism," great as he is, has no title to worship, and it is polytheism to worship the second person of the Ansairee trinity, even in connection with the first. The exact degree of dignity and the exact measure of influence assigned to this second person it is not easy to determine. The first human appearance of the Ism was that of the original Adam ; the seventh and final appearance, that of the prophet Mohammed. These appearances were only the *veil* of the Supreme Divinity. The office of the Ism seems in some sense to be that of a Demiurgus, a power through which the worlds were created and the affairs of earth are carried on. His attributes, however, like those of the Maana, are mostly in names. The fourteenth question of the Ansairee Catechism asks for the sixty-three names which the Godhead has used to manifest himself in prophets and apostles. The fifteenth question asks for the *attributive* names of the Ism to the number of forty. The sixteenth question furnishes the *mysterious* names of the Ism, such as "Mad-al Mad" in the Pentateuch, "Redeemer" in the Psalms, "Paraclete" in the Gospels, and "Mohammed" in the Koran. The seventeenth question concerns the *personal* names of the Ism, which are here given as eight instead of seven, Noah being omitted, and Aaron and Mohammed (son of Hassan) added. The eighteenth question concerns the abstract names of the Ism, such as "Will," "Perception," and "Might." Eight questions, indeed, of the hundred in the theoretical part of the Catechism are specially devoted to the Ism, but all that they give us is a confused catalogue of the *names* of the "Name."

The office of the "Bab" or "Door," the third person in the Ansairee trinity, is equally obscure in their Manual and Catechism. His names in the several "stations" and personifica-

tions are given at length, but precisely what part he performs in the economy of the Divine government is nowhere declared. With the exception of the primitive Gabriel, his appearances are in historical personages, the last, Salmân the Persian, having been a freedman of Mohammed and a famous teacher of his doctrine. The chief office of the Bab seems to be to complete the abstract system of a threefold manifestation. He is in no sense the sanctifier, and holds no such relation to the initiated Ansaireeh as the Holy Spirit holds to the souls of Christian believers. In the thirty-first question of the Catechism, indeed, the Bab is called the "perfect soul," the "Holy Ghost," but not in any dynamic sense of that title.

Subordinate to this primal system of a seven-fold manifestation of a threefold Divinity is the system of hierarchies in which the Ansairee religion abounds. It has twelve *Imâms* or Rulers, of which Ali is the first and chief, who are held in the greatest reverence, and who have each his special Bab or Door. It has five Aytâm, or Orphans, who make special appearances in connection with the various Doors, — "choice spirits," who came first as angels, and who were afterward selected from the most gifted of earth. In the system of hierarchies the Doors number four hundred, the Aytâm five hundred; and beneath these, in regular descending gradation, are the Nakeebs, or Princes, to the number of six hundred; the Nadjeebs, or "Excellent" ones, to the number of seven hundred; the Mukhtasseen, or "Peculiars," to the number of eight hundred; the Mukhliseen, "the Pure in Faith," to the number of nine hundred; and finally, eleven hundred of the Mumtahaneen, or "Tried," — seven ranks in all of the heavenly hierarchies, five thousand strong. These heavenly ranks have their signs in the heavens, and seem to be in some sense personifications of elemental forces and phenomena. They are defined and explained with more exactness than the persons of the Godhead. We learn from the Ansairee Catechism that the seven degrees of the Aytâm, or Orphans, are "the East, the West, the Moons, the New Moons, the Stars, the Thunders, and the Lightnings." So of the fourth order, of Nadjeebs, or Excellents, that their seven degrees are "the Mountains, Rain-clouds, Seas, Rivers, Winds, Clouds, Thunderbolts." Of the lowest order of the

hierarchies, the Mumtahaneen, the seven degrees are "Houses, Places of Worship, Palm-Trees, Grapes, Pomegranates, Olives, and Figs." Other names they had in heaven before these earthly names, and these seem to have been given from the need of definition, as there is some confusion between the orders. Indeed, an ordinary brain finds it hard to keep the heavenly and earthly relations of these hierarchies apart. The mystical numbers 5, 7, and 12 cross each other continually; and there are Nakeebs and Nadjeebs for the earth in companies of different number from those in the ranks of heaven. We are vexed to learn that the twenty-eight earthly Nadjeebs have names also in the world of light, in "the twenty-eight mansions or stations of the Moon."

But if the heavenly hierarchies are so bewildering in their number and their confusion, what shall we say of the earthly hierarchies,—the 14,000 Near Ones, the 15,000 Cherubim, the 16,000 "Spirituals," the 17,000 Saints, the 18,000 Hermits, the 19,000 Listeners, and the 20,000 Followers,—a goodly fellowship of 119,000 in the whole, in whom the Ansaireeh are expected to put faith, and whose intercession they may ask? Yet over and above the 124,000 that we have designated, there are numerous prophets, apostles, and heroes, that have a claim to Ansairee reverence. The Ansairee Mountains are crowned, like those of the Lebanon and of Syria, with the monuments of saints; pilgrimages are made to the tomb of the brother of Ali; Khadi il Akhdar, the "Green Green," who repeated the miracle of Aaron's rod, has honor like that of Aaron; and the greatest of all the prophets is Abdallah ibn Saba, who maintained the divinity of Ali in his lifetime. All the relations of the Lord Ali are to be duly honored;—his mother, Fatimeh, whose name must be shortened to a masculine termination; his four brothers, the "supports of the house"; his children, sons, and daughters; and all who have been signally active in establishing the true faith. Some of their prophets are personages of the Old Testament, and in the neighborhood of Ladikieh are the shrines of the prophets Reuben and Jonah. Few religious systems are richer in subordinate members of the hierarchy, and few are more fully detailed in numerical exactness. The Pythagorean mythology could not be more rigid in its arrangement of numbers.

The doctrine of creation is less full and elaborate. The present world, in the Ansairee cosmogony, is the sixth in order, five orders of intelligent beings having existed before man. On the characteristics of these races the Catechism is entirely silent, giving only the fact of their existence. Of actual worlds the Catechism affirms that there are "many," but specifies only two as within human knowledge. These are the heavenly world, or World of Light, and the "Little" world, or Earth. Light is to all the people a sacred thing, and the great luminaries of the sky, the sun and moon, are held in the highest honor. The sun and moon are not, indeed, theoretically worshipped. Yet one sect of the people turn their faces toward the sun when they pray, while another pay similar honor to the moon. The Kumreeh, or "Mooners," say that the moon is the face of Ali, while the sun is the face of Mohammed. This superstition of the Ansaireeh is evidently derived from the astronomical worship of the Magian and the Hindoo mythologies. It might be mentioned, as an instance of unconscious borrowing, that the mystic initials of a popular American party in these last years are the same as those adopted by the Ansaireeh to hide one of their high mysteries. Between the letters K and N they concealed the secret of Light, the secret of God.

The most important doctrine concerning man which the Ansaireeh hold is that of metempsychosis. It is at once the boast and the reproach of their theology. They hold it to be necessary that the soul should pass through many bodies or forms before it enters its final state. The form need not always be human. Some souls are condemned to inhabit the bodies of unclean animals; and it is a common saying among the Ansaireeh when the jackals are crying at evening, "Those are the souls of Mussulmans calling to prayer; for the souls of Mussulmans pass into jackals." The number of transmigrations varies. According to Ish-Sharestanee there are four degrees, which severally bear the names of Faskh, Naskh, Maskh, and Raskh. This is evidently but a slightly varied statement of the five degrees of suffering existence through which, according to Niebuhr, the souls of infidels must pass, before they finally become sheep, the degrees

of Fesgh, Nesgh, Mesgh, Wesgh, and Resgh. According to another authority the number of transmigrations is seventy. Good men and sheikhs are privileged in the abridgment of the number of necessary changes of soul; but the wicked and they who reveal the secrets of the Ansairee religion will be forced to "walk in low envelopes," changing perpetually through "*kaur and daur*," which seems to be the Ansairee equivalent for *secula seculorum*. The term used for body of all kinds is that of "kamees," shirt or envelope. Many transmigrations are regarded as a dreadful penalty, and the devout believer prays for deliverance from "Radd and Takrar," or many changes of spiritual condition.

While the souls of infidels become sheep and jackals, the souls of believers, after successive transformations, become stars in heaven, being thus assimilated to that centre of light from which all souls first came. The Ansairee theology does not tell us if individual consciousness is preserved through these successive states, or if the soul in one form carries with it the memory of existence under previous forms. Mr. Lyde mentions, nevertheless, several cases in which such memory of former states was claimed. A curious reason is given why so many forget their previous condition, namely, that they are plunged up to their necks in the Jordan. We have nowhere before noticed the identity of the sacred river with the classic Lethe. The Ansaireeh speak of the resurrection and the day of judgment; but these terms, as they use them, have only an allegorical meaning. Their heavens and hells are by no means the habitations which Swedenborg has so patiently described.

There seems to be nothing in the Ansairee books concerning the origin of evil, the fall of man, or the scheme of redemption. The only kinds of sin which they recognize are special and ritual sins, and they spend no force upon the questions which most other systems examine. They have not even a positive canon of Scripture. They are eclectic and catholic in their recognition of sacred books, receiving the Old Testament and the New, the Psalms and the Koran, with apocryphal additions enough to swell the number to one hundred and fourteen books. They have no book of their own that corresponds

to the Koran in Moslem use or the Bible in Christian use. Their book of the Fetwas, or Decisions of the Doctors, is known only by its title, and is probably not to be compared in relative importance with the Jewish Talmud.

In its ethics and ritual the Ansairee religion has more resemblance to Christianity than in its*theology. The eighty-fourth question in the Catechism contains a short summary of duties. The believer who will receive the secret of God, which is the end of all religion as it is the object of all desire, must "assist his brethren with all his means; must give them the fifth part of his goods; must pray at the appointed hours; must fulfil his obligations; must give to all their dues; must obey his Lord, invoke him, thank him, often pronounce his name, in all points submit himself to his will, and keep himself from everything that may displease him." According to the next question, the second thing which the believer must avoid, is "injury to his brethren." These answers certainly are not very unlike those which Jesus gave to the young ruler; and they might be rendered, that love to God and love to brethren are the two great Ansairee commandments. All that the duty of love to God implies is comprehended in the Ansairee injunction to prayer. The prayers of this people are not so much petitions for personal favors, as they are ascriptions of honor and glory to God, and repetitions of his manifold offices and dignities. The worship is the utterance of the creed. The prayers are set and formal, both in the language to be used and in the time appointed for them. The Ansaireeh pray three times in the day, before sunrise, at noon, and again before sunset. The morning prayer is the most important. They do not require any consecrated house, but pray in the open air, singly or in companies. The number of prostrations, according to rule, is fifty-one; but they are careless of these, and in ordinary prayer make no prostrations. They will not pray in the presence of a Christian, and if a Christian accidentally witnesses their devotion, it becomes void. For their special religious services and their secret rites, the most important of which is the consecration of the sacred wine, they use the houses of the sheikhs and the *zeyâreh*, or "visiting-places." This consecration of the wine is the chief element in

the Ansairee Mass. The offering of bread (Kurbân) is provided for in the Catechism; but the sacred wine is of higher account, and is given to all true believers. Only males are initiated; but among the Ansaireeh, unlike the custom of the Druses, all males are initiated. Circumcision is the necessary preliminary to initiation. The most perfect secrecy is observed in their ritual, and the details of the service of the Mass which Mr. Lyde is enabled to give are very fragmentary.

The only sacred houses of the Ansaireeh are the zeyâreh's, or "visiting-places." These are rather shrines than churches, and are comparatively few in number. They are not, like the Druse Hâlwehs, placed in the villages, but are usually somewhat apart, on the summits of the hills or in the recesses of the groves. The building is in shape that of the common sheikh's tomb, as it is seen in Southern Syria, and in fact almost always bears the name of some saint or prophet. It consists of one or more square rooms, lighted by a single door, and capped by a low whitewashed dome. In a house hard by usually lives the sheikh attendant upon the zeyâreh, whose business it is to receive and entertain the pilgrims that visit the shrine, and to make ready the meetings and feasts which are held there. The principal zeyâreh's in the Ansairee Mountains are the tombs of the prophets Jonah and Reuben, of the Sultan Djaaffar Zayyâr, of Ahmed Kirfâs, the freezer of roads, and the cave of the Virgin Mary. There are also shrines to the native Christians; and, in fact, the traditional saints, as well as the shrines, of Syria seem to belong to all sects alike. These zeyâreh's are held in the greatest reverence. They are places of refuge to the fugitive. Merchandise placed in them is as safe as are goods in the mosques of Stamboul. They are perfumed with the smoke of incense; and an oath taken in their name is as binding as the Jew's oath by the Temple or the Holy City. The name of God is less regarded than the name of one of these holy places.

The chief feasts celebrated by the Ansaireeh in their "visiting-places" are the Kuzelleh and the Nurooz, the first borrowed from the Christians, the second from the Persians. The Kuzelleh is the New Year's festival, and is kept on the day which the Eastern reckoning retains for New Year's day. At

intervals during the previous month there are days and nights of feasting, when the people light fires on the hill-tops, eat sweet-cakes, and sprinkle the door-posts with the blood of fowls. On the day before the festival they kill their "unlawful" sacrifice, which means any animal that they can conveniently steal for the occasion. The "lawful" sacrifice is killed on the eve of the feast, and when no large animal can be procured a kid is slaughtered. Before they eat of this, their clothes must be washed and their persons duly purified. Their ceremonies on the day are somewhat like those of New Year's day in New York; they visit each other's houses, singly and in parties, dress in their best suits, and treat their friends to cakes and arrack. The prayers in the zeyâreh are at the break of day, and all classes go in together, the women and children with the men, this being a feast for all the people, and not, like the Nurooz, for the initiated only. The Kuzelleh is followed, after an interval of six days, by the Yetâs, or feast of immersion, when all classes go to the fountains or the rivers to bathe together.

The Nurooz is a more strictly religious festival, and is considered in the questions of the Ansairee Catechism, where no notice is taken of the Kuzelleh. The time of its celebration is the 4th of April, according to the Eastern reckoning, which, it being on the first day of the Persian year, gave to it its name of the "New Day." On this day the initiated meet in the zeyârehs to drink the sacred wine, and to repeat together the prayers prescribed in the Catechism. Accompanying this religious meeting is a feast at the sheikh's house, at which the Kumreeh sect allow persons not of their communion to be present, and even the women to partake of the food. Other festivals, borrowed some from the Persians and some from the Moslems, are kept by the Ansaireeh; but they have no day which corresponds to the Christian Easter, and no season of fasting which resembles the Christian Lent, or the Ramadân of Islam. They know and honor the birthday of Christ, but they do not make it an occasion of special worship or of public rejoicing.

The costume adopted by the Ansaireeh on the occasion of their solemn meetings is not altogether according to the West-

ern idea of convenience or decency. They wear their shirts over their drawers, turn down the heels of their shoes, and leave their arms at home. According to the "sermon" of which Mr. Lyde gives a translation, the decorum of the sacred house prohibits black handkerchiefs, blue turbans, long robes without slits, long moustaches, combing the beard with the hand, cracking the fingers, raising the eyes too high, and raising the voice too loudly. The true Ansairer worshipper will be equally careful not to have a dirty shirt, and not to speak louder than the presiding Imâm. He is to go to the meeting with the intention of prayer, and not of trade or self-indulgence.

The process of learning the Ansairer prayers is not very easy or comfortable. The boys are not early trained to this duty, like Moslem and Christian boys, but are prohibited from witnessing the rites, for which, nevertheless, they must be duly prepared. The weeks previous to the time of initiation are spent in forcing the youth, by dint of cramming and cuffing, to learn the prayers which he will be expected to repeat. The young disciple's private tutor, who has the name of "Uncle," spends thirty days or more in getting his pupil ready for the ordeal. Properly speaking, initiation ought to come before marriage; but in some cases the candidate has a wife to interfere with his preparation, which must be kept quite secret from the knowledge or scrutiny of any woman.

No writer has yet been able to tell with confidence the whole secret of the Ansairer initiation, how many sponsors there are, whether two or ten, what symbols are used, what oaths administered, or what privileges acquired. That the sect is a fraternity, having in its signs and passwords some resemblance to the secret orders of Christendom, there can be no doubt; but from the hints which the books supply, we may infer that their cabalistic signs and methods are much less elaborate than those of the Freemasons or the religious orders. They are bound to silence by terrible threats, and the efforts of other sects to extort from them their secrets have thus far quite failed. To the eighty-sixth question of the Catechism, which asks, "Is the believer allowed to make known to any one the secret of secrets?" the answer is moderate, but de-

cided, — “Only to those of his religion, else he will lose the favor of God.” According to Mr. Lyde’s manuscript, the new disciple swears, “Wallah and Billah, and three oaths by God and seven oaths by God and eighty oaths by God, forty standing and forty sitting; I have confidence in God, and what you commit to me of the secret of God I will not sell it, nor divulge it, nor command its being written for those who have no right to it, neither in your lifetime nor after your death; neither in a state of covetousness, nor in a state of acceptance, nor in a state of hardship.”

The term “Sheikh” is applied by the Ansaireeh to their religious teachers, who have charge, not only of instruction, but of all the offices usually intrusted to a sacred class. The dignity is properly hereditary, yet any one who knows how to read and write may become a sheikh. The dress of the class is a white turban, white shirt, waistcoat, and wide trousers, with high red boots and a red girdle. They go without arms, are particular in their diet, eating no food prepared by Christians, or bought with money wrongly obtained, and subsist mainly on the gifts of the people, who hold them in great reverence. They profess to tell fortunes, to read the signs of the zodiac, to exorcise demons, to prepare amulets, and to detect crimes by second-sight. All matters of dispute are referred to their arbitration. They change names, preside in the administration of justice, ratify marriage contracts, and take charge of funeral processions. Sometimes the same individuals have both sacred and secular authority, but in most instances the ruler of the tribe and its religious leader are different persons.

Mr. Lyde, as we before said, emphatically denies the charge which has been brought against the Ansaireeh, that licentiousness is a part of their religion. Low as is the standard of their morality, he holds that in the relation of the sexes they are as pure as any Oriental people, and more so than most of the Syrian tribes. Every man, with the exception of some of the sheikhs, is compelled by public opinion to marry, and those who have the means may multiply their wives to the number of four, though few, even in good condition, have more than two or three. The price of the wife is paid by the bridegroom, partly to the bride’s father and partly to the sheikh

who arranges the contract. A small portion of this is given to the girl as a wedding present, and she receives also some articles of dress and bedding. The marriage ceremonies resemble those of the tribes of Southern Syria, in the prolonged feasting, the mock contests, the noisy discharges of fire-arms, the piping, dancing, and numerous ablutions. Divorce is as easy as in Indiana, but is not frequent, nor honorable where the wife is also a mother. Marriages usually take place at an early age, and large families are esteemed a blessing.

The Ansairee funerals are attended with some peculiar ceremonies. Incense is burned in the house and upon the tomb; the singing at the grave ends with the discharge of musketry; and for a week afterward all the outward tokens of mourning are paraded. The principal sign of mourning is unwashed raiment. There are no hired mourners, and no official mourner but the sheikh. The tombs are hung and garlanded with myrtle, which to the Ansaireeh, as to the Moslems, is the sacred and favorite plant.

Nothing is said in the Catechism about clean or unclean food, and in most particulars the Ansaireeh follow in their prohibitions of food the Moslem custom. They add, however, to this a few items, refusing all flesh of animals not properly killed, everything burned, all fish without scales, such as eels, all flesh of imperfect animals, and all blood. They are unwilling to use the camel and the rabbit for food; and to the Shemseeh the use of tobacco is unlawful, and the sheikhs never indulge in it. This abstinence from smoking seems to discredit one of the epithets applied to the sacred teachers in the "Manual for Sheikhs," — "children of the chimneys."

The details which we have given are in substance the information which Mr. Lyde's work furnishes concerning the rude and decaying race that has possessed for ages the mountain region of Northern Syria. If these details are not very valuable, they constitute at least a contribution to ethnography, and may stimulate a curiosity which shall investigate more fully. It is probable that at no distant day this region will be opened to the influences of Western civilization, and more important discoveries may be expected concerning the origin and the religion of this Ansairee people. Their constant de-

crease in number and steady lapse into comparative barbarism, the ruin of their towns and the loss of their national unity, seem to portend their sure extinction. The labors of the missionaries may yet prevail to save a few souls before the nation disappears.

We cannot forbear quoting from their manual of devotion the following passage, which, utterly alien from the notions and the practice of the people, might seem a commentary on the words of the Saviour of men.

“ Know, O brethren, that God has ordained to his servants, the true believers, in the times of prayer, purity of intention and right deeds, and the cleansing of the heart, and mutual friendship, and your forgiving one another; and if there is any enmity or hatred between any one and his brother in respect of worldly matters, he must forgive him. And you must make your love to one another pure, O brethren, and seek pardon and forgiveness, according to the saying of our Lord il Aalim (Mohammed il Bahir), (from him is peace): — ‘ A believer does not become such really until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself, and dislikes in his case what he would dislike for himself.’ Know, too, my brethren, that your brother, the master of this sitting, has assembled you only for prayers and to ascribe unity to God (may he be exalted and glorified!) At the times of prayer it is not permitted to any one to have in his heart any matter which has not reference to God; but all the members must be employed only in the remembrance of God (may he be praised and exalted!). Make, then, your intentions pure, till the intention shall be but as one intention. And know, O brethren, that you have put me forward to pray for you, who am the meanest and most despicable, the poorest and least among you; and I have no power to be your Imâm; but, as a slave and the least of servants, I serve you in lowliness and meanness, without lordship or self-exaltation.”

Such words indicate a nearer or remoter source utterly alien from a false teacher or a false religion.